

To Mr. Hodson.

A token of affection & respect  
for the many favours done the Author.

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A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF

PENTONVILLE CHAPEL,

NEAR ISLINGTON,

On SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28th, 1788.

1063

## ADVERTISEMENT.

The Profits arising from the Sale of this Sermon, are appropriated to the Encouragement of a Sunday School, in the District of Pentonville.





*Christ condescending to dwell with Men:*

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

A S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF

PENTONVILLE CHAPEL,

NEAR ISLINGTON,

On SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28th, 1788.

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BY J. A. K N I G H T,

MINISTER OF THAT CHAPEL.

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"THUS SAITH THE HIGH AND LOFTY ONE THAT INHABITETH  
ETERNITY, WHOSE NAME IS HOLY: I DWELL IN THE HIGH  
AND HOLY PLACE, WITH HIM ALSO THAT IS OF A CONTRITE  
AND HUMBLE SPIRIT."

*Isaiah.*

"CHRIST IN YOU THE HOPE OF GLORY."

*St. Paul.*

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TO THE  
PROPRIETORS OF PENTONVILLE CHAPEL,

THE FOLLOWING

S E R M O N,

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE SERVANT IN THE GOSPEL,

J. A. KNIGHT.

PENTONVILLE, Oct. 9, 1788.

TO THE

PROPRIETORS OF BENTONVILLE CHAPEL

THE FOLLOWING

S. E. R. M. O. N.

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE SERVANTS IN THE GOSPEL

J. A. KNIGHT

Bentonville, Oct. 1882



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S E R M O N, &c.

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II. CHRON. vi. 18, 19, 20, 21.

*But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee: how much less this house which I have built! Have respect therefore to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee:— That thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said, that thou wouldst put thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth towards this place. Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make towards this place: hear thou from thy dwelling-place, even from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive.*

**T**O a gracious heart there is a peculiar pleasure arising from a review of the Lord's faithfulness in the accomplishment of his promises, for the present and eternal good of his people, and the glory of his own adorable name; nor do I know a season in the Christian's experience, while in

the house of his earthly pilgrimage, in which he approaches so nearly to the felicities of the blessed, as when, under the shinings of God's countenance, he is enabled to look back with thankfulness upon past mercies, and forward with steadfast hope, in the sweet anticipation of that glory which is yet to be revealed.

I am naturally led to this reflection, and to the choice of the subject before me, from the solemn occasion upon which we are this day assembled. Your hands, my friends, have laid the foundation of this house, in the name of the Lord ; and through his divine blessing we are now met, I trust, with united hearts and voices, to ascribe the glory to him who has spared us to bring forth the top stone with joy. May his glory fill this house, and his grace and love possess all our hearts !

We learn from the seventh verse of the chapter from which our text has been taken, that God had put it into the heart of David, king of Israel, to build an house for his name : and upon comparing that passage with the seventh chapter of the second book of Samuel, we find under what particular circumstances of his reign that desire was impressed upon his heart. " It came to pass," says the sacred historian, " when the king sat  
in



in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies round about, that the king said unto Nathan, See now I dwell in an house of cedar, and the ark of God dwelleth within curtains. And Nathan said to the king, Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee." The Lord was pleased to accept the intention of David's heart, and permitted him to collect the materials for building the temple; but the honour of erecting that stupendous edifice was reserved for his son and successor, Solomon, who, in the tenth verse of this chapter, in the highest strains of grateful admiration, records the goodness of the Lord; who, according to his promise to David his father, had raised him up to sit upon the throne of Israel, and build an house for his name. He had reared, at an immense expence, one of the most magnificent structures that ever the world beheld; and, from the account which is given us in the preceding chapter, the solemnities of its dedication were not inferior to the splendor of its external appearance: The priests, the ministers of the Lord, entered the temple, bearing the ark of the covenant, before which the king and all the people of Israel were assembled, and sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be

told or numbered for multitude ; the Levites, who were singers, gave attendance at the altar, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals, psalteries, and harps, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets ; while the king and all the people shouted, as with one heart and with one voice, “ Praise the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.” Yet in the midst of all this external magnificence, such were the views which Solomon had of the surpassing majesty of the God whom he addressed, that he cries, in the sublime words before us, “ But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth ? Behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee : how much less this house which I have built !” &c.

The words of our text direct our meditations,

First, to the glorious object of Solomon’s address ;

Secondly, to the manner in which he approached the throne of God ;

Thirdly, to consider the nature of that forgiveness which he so earnestly implored ; and,

Fourthly,



Fourthly, from the success with which his supplications were crowned, to suggest a word of encouragement to those who are waiting upon him, that never said to any of Jacob's seed, " Seek ye my face," in vain.

First, then, we are to speak of the glorious object of Solomon's address; and, in considering this part of our subject, it is not my intention to attempt a definition of HIS nature, in whose pure eyes even the heavens are not clean, and who charges his angels with folly; for what finite creature is equal to such a task? My design is rather to point out some of those sublime and striking passages of divine truth, which set forth the majesty and mercy of that glorious Being who is the hope and strength of all them that fear him. And,

1. The scriptures inform us, that the Lord who created all things out of nothing, and whose sovereign bounty sustains the creatures whom he formed, is, and necessarily must be, self-existent, and independent of those who owe their being and their blessings to his goodness. Hence, when he came down to deliver his people Israel from their hard bondage in Egypt, this was the name by which he revealed himself to Moses from the  
burning

burning bush, I AM THAT I AM; *i. e.* the self-existent Jehovah. Had the being or happiness of our God been in any measure dependent upon us, as ours under him are upon each other, it were less wonderful that he should so distinguish us; but that he who in his nature is, and must have been, eternally existent, and essentially blessed, had we never been created or redeemed, should stoop so low as to consider our happiness worthy of his supreme regard, must constrain every renewed heart to cry, with David, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" Again,

2. The unity of the Holy Trinity, in the divine essence, is a truth clearly and frequently inculcated in the volume of inspiration. That a plurality of persons were engaged in the creation of man is evident: "Let US (saith the triune Jehovah), make man in OUR own image, after OUR likeness \*." And it is clear, that, to the glorious work of man's redemption, "there are Three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One †."

\* Gen. i. 26.

† 1 John, v. 7.



The boasting advocates for reason, as they are pleased to call themselves, affect, it is true, to despise this grand fundamental article of the Christian faith, because it is incomprehensible; but upon that ground, if they would be consistent, they must deny the very being of God, and the union which subsists between their own souls and bodies; for the nature of those existences are mysteries which are inexplicable to us; yet who that is in his senses will deny their reality?

Farther, not only is the Lord Jehovah adorable in his self-existence, and in the unity of his divine essence; but also,

3. In the immaculate holiness of his nature. Hear the testimony of the Jewish lawgiver: "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the Gods! who is like thee, glorious in holiness\*!" It was a deep conviction of this distinguishing characteristic of deity which urged Job, even that perfect and upright man, to cry, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes†." So likewise when the prophet Isaiah saw, in a vision, the

\* Exodus, xv. 11,

† Job, xlii. 5, 6.

God of Israel seated on his throne, high and lifted up, and heard the adoring seraphims singing, in responsive strains, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts," he said, "Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts\*." We proceed to consider,

4. The immensity of Jehovah's fulness: and here we have a spacious field. In this glorious truth is included infinitely more than the brightest mind of a mortal can conceive, even aided by revelation itself. Who can fathom the depths of HIS wisdom who governs all his works, and orders all events? Who can comprehend HIS power which over-rules all things, for the glory of his own name, and the good of his creatures? Or what finite mind can tell the extent of HIS goodness, which flows to all in heaven, and all on earth; or the unsearchable riches of HIS mercy, from whence all our miseries are relieved, and all our wants supplied? How strikingly expressive, both of the majesty and mercy of the Lord, is that grateful acknowledgment of the Psalmist, "Thou openest

\* Isa. vi. 1—5.



thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing \*." From this inexhaustible source what myriads of beings are from moment to moment supplied ! And yet (how animating the thought ! ) our God is not impoverished by his gifts. We observe,

5. That as the treasures of his goodness are inexhaustible, so the existence of Jehovah is without end. " With him there is neither beginning of days, nor end of life ; from everlasting to everlasting he IS God ; and when the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall perish and wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture be folded up and worn no more, HE is eternally the same, and his years shall not fail †." Such are the views which the scriptures give us of that great and glorious God with whom we have to do ; but, had they only set forth the awful greatness of his holy name, without leading us on to consider the unspeakable goodness which he exercises toward his guilty creatures, with what confidence or comfort could we, whom sin hath set at such an infinite distance, have ventured into his presence, who is of purer eyes than to be-

\* Psal. cxlv. 16.

† Heb. i. 11, 12.

hold iniquity? But, glory be to his name! his own unerring wisdom hath devised, and his almighty power accomplished, a way in which the offended majesty of heaven, and offending sinners, may meet together upon terms of eternal friendship. Hear what the Lord of life declares: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life\*.” With this also agrees the apostle’s testimony, that “he was made sin (*i. e.* a sin offering) for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him †.” And, “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons ‡.” Does any trembling soul in this assembly secretly say, with that solicitude which so important a question demands, “Wherewith shall I come before God? or what ground is there for such a sinner to hope, that he whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, will look in mercy upon, and dwell with, one

\* John iii. 16. † II. Cor. v. 21. ‡ Gal. iv. 4, 5.



so lost and so unworthy ?"—it is no less my privilege than my happiness to tell the poor mourner, that Jesus yet lives, and is the gracious friend of the returning sinner; that he hath wrought out everlasting righteousness for the justification of the unworthy, by the spotless obedience of his holy life; and, by the infinite efficacy of his atonement upon the cross, the law is satisfied, divine wrath is appeased, the fountain of grace is opened, and over it is written, "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of salvation freely\*."—"Here mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other; truth springs out of the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven upon the guilty sons of men†." Let us call upon our hearts, and all that is within us, to bless our heavenly Father for the unspeakable gift of his dear Son: let the name of our divine Redeemer be equally and eternally adored; who, though he was rich in glory, and exalted above all possible praise, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and became so very poor on earth, that, though "foxes have holes, and the birds of

\* Rev. xxi. 17.

† Psal. lxxxv. 9, 10.

the air have nests, the Son of God, while he tabernacled below, had not whereon to lay his head ;” and for this end—that we through his poverty might be enriched with the blessings of his grace on earth ; and, by the influence of that grace upon our hearts, made meet for the enjoyment of his glorious kingdom for ever : and to the Holy Spirit of all grace, co-equal with the Father and the Son, whose almighty power raises the dead in sin to a life of righteousness—who gives the knowledge of salvation, and seals it upon the hearts of his people—be equal glory, and endless praises, ascribed.—It was with a view to excite his son Solomon to seek this glorious Savior, and an interest in his precious salvation, that David, the man after God’s own heart, just before his departure to heaven, inculcated that striking admonition upon him, “ Thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind ; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts ; if thou seek him, he will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever\*.”

\* 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.



Nor was the admonition lost; for when the God of Israel appeared unto Solomon at Gibeon, in a dream of the night, and bid him ask what he should give him, the amiable youth, directed by the influence of divine grace, and doubtless with the counsel of his dying father fresh upon his mind, included all his desires in one, and said, "Give thy servant an understanding heart \*." How happy the father of such a son, nor less privileged the son of so gracious and tender a parent! But happier still was Solomon in knowing the privilege of access to the throne of God in the spirit of adoption, and with the holy familiarity of a child.—Which leads me,

Secondly, to point out the manner in which Solomon approached the presence of that glorious Jehovah who fills heaven and earth with his goodness: and in this sublime address to the Almighty, we observe,

1. A grateful admiration of the divine faithfulness.—"Praise (saith the Psalmist) is comely for the upright, for it well becometh the just to be thankful:" and then are we in the most suitable frame to receive the blessings of our God, when, like this favored

\* I. Kings, iii. 9.

servant, we lie low at his footstool, with an humble sense of his unspeakable and unmerited mercies to our souls. Hear the humble confession of his heart—"The king turned his face, and blessed the whole congregation of Israel (and all the congregation of Israel stood); and he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled that which he spake with his mouth to my father David \*." This was an acknowledgment which none but a gracious man can know the sweetness of; and in such happy seasons, when the candle of the Lord shines upon our heads, and the good spirit of grace warms and melts our hearts, how delightful it is to sing with him of old, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever †." Yes, it shall be with the believer in Jesus now, as it was with the Israel of God of old: for, as then, the water which flowed from the smitten rock followed them through all the wilderness to the temporal Canaan; so the constant supplies of the Redeemer's grace shall follow his people through all their earthly pilgrimage, until

\* Verse 3, 4.

† Psal. xxiii. 6.



they appear in his presence above, and are exalted at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

2. The inward adoration of Solomon's heart, was strongly expressed by the profound reverence of his body. "The king had a brazen scaffold set in the midst of the court; and he kneeled down upon his knees, before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven, and said, "O Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee in the heaven nor in the earth, which keepest covenant, and shewest mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all their hearts \*." What a scene was this! Let the daring infidels of our degenerate day, who are in their own eyes too wise, and too much exalted, to worship the God of the Bible, consider it, and blush for their own perverseness and pride, while they behold Solomon, the wisest of men, and the most exalted of all the princes of the earth, in this day of his greatest earthly glory, in the presence of angels and men, bowing as an humble suppliant at the feet of Jehovah, and ascribing the praise of all the mercies which he enjoyed to his glo-

\* Verse 13, 14.

rious name. Let the worshipping assemblies of God's people also learn, from those who were present at the dedication of the temple, in what frame of spirit it becomes them to wait upon the Lord. There were few wandering eyes or listless hearers in that assembly. No! methinks every eye was fixed, and every heart engaged in the solemn service. How happy for us, were this more the case in our public assemblies! With what pleasure might ministers then preach, and what blessings might not you expect to receive, were your souls, to use the emphatic words of David, "gasping after God as a thirsty land."—And may not the ministers of the Lord learn from the example of Solomon, that seriousness and solemnity become them in their public ministrations\*? In his conduct there was nothing to make the shallow professor laugh, or the heart of the serious christian mourn; on the contrary, it exemplified the

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 'Tis pitiful

To court a grin, when we should woo a soul;

To break a jest, when pity should inspire

Pathetic exhortation; and t' address

The skittish fancy with facetious tales,

When sent with God's commission to the heart.

COWPER

truth



truth of that declaration, “ Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever.”—May that reverence of the eternal Jehovah ever attend our preaching and hearing, which we shall wish had attended them, when time with us will be no more.

3. The deep humiliation of Solomon before the God of Israel, suggests an important lesson for our improvement.—He had, as we have already heard, erected an house for the name of the Lord, adorned with all that art or nature could afford; but after all his toil and cost, when he considered the work of his hands, and at the same time reflected upon the dignity and glory of HIM, who by a word spake not a temple only, but a world, into existence—his own work shrinks into nothing, and he records it as an astonishing instance of the divine condescension, that God should regard either the house which he had built, or the worm who had dedicated it to his praise.—Thus it is, when in the light of the holy spirit we behold, by faith, the perfect work and finished righteousness of God our Savior; then, like the great apostle to the gentiles, we are taught to esteem “ those things which were gain to us, but loss for Christ;” and the prevailing desire of our souls will be, that we

may win Christ, and be found in him; not having on our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith \*.”—Let me, before I proceed, recommend the example of Solomon to you, my friends, in particular, who have set your hands to the building of this structure for God’s worship and service. I am informed, when you laid the foundation stone, it was with a benevolent wish that thousands might have cause to praise the Lord for ever, in the house not made with hands, for the blessings which he should confer upon their souls in this place. I pray God they may! But let us remember this important truth, that “all the good which is done upon earth, the Lord himself doth it.” It is indeed our honour that he permits us to be the instruments of his goodness: but, after all, we are only unprofitable servants; and in our approaches before God have cause to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, saying, “Enter not into judgment with thy servants, O Lord, for in thy sight

\* Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9.



shall no man living (but in thy merits and righteousness) be justified or glorified."

4. Let us, in our addresses at the throne of grace, cultivate that generous benevolence for our fellow sinners, which breathes through the whole of this chapter.—The captive, the exile, the backslider, and even the stranger to the God of Israel, were not forgotten in Solomon's prayer, though the greatest monarch upon earth. And shall they be forgotten by us? Surely not! As our fellow creatures they have a claim upon our sympathy; and if through divine grace we are delivered from the pit into which by nature all have fallen, let that consideration lead us to adore the mercy which hath made us to differ, and to implore the blessing of God upon those who have no heart to ask it for themselves.—I am well aware it has been objected, that, were we to adopt the troubles of others, we should never want sorrow. But let those who are capable of such an objection, fall down and bless our divine Redeemer that he hath not dealt so with us; for had he not "remembered us in our low estate," and condescended to toil for our ease, and die to give us life, what must have become of us all?—May his gracious spirit enable us, in our

numble measure, to follow his bright example, who went about doing good ! that “ when the ear heareth us it may bless us, and when the eye seeth us it may give witness unto us ; yea, may the blessing of thousands come upon us, as the instruments of God, in delivering the poor, and the fatherless, and him that hath none to help \*.” In such a disposition of heart, we see the grand design of the gospel dispensation exemplified, which, while it teaches us to ascribe “ glory to God in the highest, and promotes peace on earth, inspires our breasts with the tenderest good will to men †.” And we may boldly affirm that he who is a stranger to this sweet constraint upon his heart, never yet knew the end for which existence was bestowed on man.—Influenced by this divine principle, the man to whom my text relates, though highly distinguished above others in wisdom and in wealth, felt, what it became him well to feel, a consciousness (which is ever the effect of divine grace) that all his blessings were of the Lord, and had been conferred upon him as the gift of sovereign bounty.—On this ground the prince has no pre-eminence above

\* Job, xxix. 13.

† Luke, ii. 14.



the peasant, nor are the wise above the ignorant, in the sight of that God with whom there is but one possible way of salvation, "even by his tender mercy, in the free remission of sin, through Jesus Christ our Lord\*." Of the nature of that forgiveness we are,

Thirdly, to speak.—There is perhaps nothing of which men in general have more confused and mistaken ideas, than of the nature of divine mercy. Ask the man who is living securely in a course of sin, how he hopes to be accepted in the sight of God, and the usual answer is, "The Lord is merciful." True; and we can never sufficiently praise him, that his delight is to bestow it upon the guilty. But has he no regard for the holiness of his nature, the equity of his government, and the righteous requirements of his holy law? Shall no provision be made for these, because man must be saved? Yes, my brethren, it is an eternal truth that, without perfect satisfaction for sin, no man shall ever see the face of God but to his eternal condemnation.—Is it asked, "How then shall man be justified with God? or how can he be made clean that is born of

\* Luke, i. 77, 78.

a woman \*?" Let me answer in the words of Jehovah himself—"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins: put me in remembrance; let us plead together; declare thou, that thou mayest be justified †."—In our contemplations on the nature of divine pardon, there are four considerations which must for ever endear it to those who are experimentally acquainted with that inestimable blessing.

1. The price by which it was procured. "Ye were not redeemed (says an inspired apostle) from your vain conversation with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot †."—In the sufferings and death of the great Redeemer, we behold the invariable regard which Jehovah has for the unsullied holiness of his own nature, and the unparalleled love of Jesus in undertaking our cause, and making himself the voluntary victim of incensed justice. Yes, it was for us that he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; for us his sacred

\* Job, xxv. 4.

† Isa. xliii. 25, 26.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.



vifage was marred more than any man's, and on his eyelids fat the shadow of death. He was spit upon, derided, blasphemed, betrayed, and crucified, that by his stripes, sorrows, and death our souls might be healed, and the gate of heaven opened to all them that believe on his name.—Again,

2. The absolute freeness with which the Lord bestows his mercy upon the guilty, is another endearing consideration. True it is, that it cost our divine surety dear: but, with respect to us, the light which we behold at noon day, and the air which we breathe, are not more freely bestowed, as the bounties of providence, than the blessings of grace and pardon flow to poor perishing sinners through the blood of the Lamb: and indeed, were not this the case, the blessing would be unsuited to the misery and helplessness of man in a state of nature; to represent which, the most striking expressions are used in the word of God. Hence, we are said by the apostle Paul to be, while in a natural state, “ children of wrath and without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise; as having no hope, and being without God in the

the world \*.” Surely then the grace which extends itself to sinners so poor and helpless, must needs be absolutely free; and it is observable that all the declarations of the gospel run in this channel: “ I will pardon and love them freely †.”—Farther,

3. The abundant fulness and sufficiency of divine pardon is equally encouraging to the soul of a convinced sinner.—With men, forgiveness is limited to a particular extent; and even under the legal dispensation there were some offences, particularly murder and adultery, for which no satisfaction short of the death of the transgressor was admissible. But, blessed be God! under the Gospel dispensation we are authorised by the Redeemer himself to declare, that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven fully and freely, for his sake, to the humbled penitent whom his own efficacious grace hath brought to his feet, with repentance, and godly sorrow for his offences: for “ as in the universal deluge (to use the words of an excellent writer) the waters which descended from above covered the loftiest mountains as well as the lesser

\* Eph. ii. 3—12. † Compare Hosea, xiv. 4, with Isa. lv. 1, and Rev. xxii. 17.

hills,



hills, so the unfathomable ocean of divine mercy covers the most enormous transgressions:" and, " though our sins reach to heaven, the mercies of our God are above the heavens, and his faithfulness above the clouds." Say then, does conscience bring heavy charges against us, to which we cannot answer one of a thousand, Let us remember, the Lord's gracious invitation still is, " Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool\*:" for " the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth from all sin †." May the divine application of this comfortable truth speak peace to all our hearts!

4. That which makes the blessing of pardon truly invaluable is, that, when once bestowed, it is irreversibile in its nature; and, like all the gifts and callings of God, without repentance, *i. e.* not to be retracted.—Instances have been, and often are known, where persons apparently united to each other for a course of years, by the strongest bond of human affection, have broke that sacred

\* Isa. i. 18.

† I. John, i. 7.

tie, and afterwards become the most implacable enemies ; but when a soul is brought into a state of friendship with God, the most infallible assurances are given us, that such an one “ shall not perish, nor shall any (nor all his enemies combined) pluck him out of the hand of his almighty Savior \*.”—Neither “ shall death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor heights, nor depths, nor any other creature, be able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord †.”—Review those strong declarations of thy God, O believer, and then say, if liberty is half so sweet to a poor captive, light to a benighted traveller, water to a thirsty soul, or pardon to a condemned malefactor, as the rich and everlasting mercy of God in Christ is to thy soul.—Hath the Holy Spirit kindled a desire after this unspeakable blessing in any of your hearts, and are you saying, “ O that I knew where I might find it !” attend to what Jesus advises —“ Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened

\* John, x. 28.

† Rom. viii. 38, 39.



unto you \*.”—Thousands have pursued earthly honours, and human applause ; and, it is to be feared, have lost an immortal prize in the pursuit, without attaining their object. But never was a soul made willing to accept salvation as the free gift of God, for Christ’s sake, who did not infallibly obtain it :—wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and let the feeble-minded be encouraged to wait upon him whose mercy endureth for ever.—With a view to animate our hope, let us,

Fourthly, consider the Lord’s gracious attention to Solomon’s prayer. “ The Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice, and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually †.”—So true is that word of promise, “ Before they call I will answer ; and while they are yet speaking I will hear ‡.”—Spread then thy wants before the Lord, and tell him all thy fears ; Israel’s God is still the refuge and portion of his people. “ His hand is not

\* Matt. vii. 7.

† Chap. viii. 12, 16.

‡ Isa. lxxv. 24.

shortened that it cannot save, nor is his ear heavy that it cannot hear ;” therefore wait thou upon the Lord, and in due time thou shalt adopt the language of David, and say, “ O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together ; I fought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears †.”—But there are perhaps some in this assembly who never bow the knee to God, but, like the brutes that perish, rise in the morning and lie down at night, but God, their merciful preserver, is not in all their thoughts. If such there are, let them know, that however easy it may be to live in a course of infidelity while health and strength remain, it is awful to be found in such a state when we are called to stand before the judge of quick and dead : and though men may (as one well expresses it) live fools, they cannot die so ; or, if they do, death and eternity will undeceive them. May divine mercy interpose ! and, on their behalf, may there this morning “ be joy in the presence of the angels of God over their repenting and returning souls !”

† Psal. xxxiv. 3, 4.



Permit me, my brethren, to remind you that, when Solomon dedicated the temple to God, it was with an offering; and it deserves our particular regard, that when the Israelites, under the Old Testament dispensation, celebrated their solemn feasts, they were expressly forbidden to appear before the Lord empty\*:—and surely our obligations to gratitude are not less binding than theirs.—On this solemn occasion therefore I am to solicit your bounty, not toward the expence of erecting this house for the service of God (nor will the congregation who worship here ever be burthened with collections for that purpose), but on the behalf of an institution which does honour to the humanity of the worthy individual with whom the design originated †; I

\* Exodus, xxiii. 15.

† Mr. Robert Raikes of Gloucester was the instrument under God of instituting the first Sunday School at Painswick in Gloucestershire, in the summer of the year 1784; and, by the divine blessing upon his pious endeavours, it is computed there are now considerably above two hundred thousand children, in the different parts of England, who are led to public worship every Sabbath day, taught to read their Bibles, and instructed in the fear of God, and the religious observance of his holy day.

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mean the establishment of a Sunday School, with a view to rescue the rising generation among the poor, in this vicinity, from that deplorable ignorance in which they are immersed: and, should the Lord smile upon the endeavour, it is designed to enlarge the plan, and give them a more perfect course of education.—Upon the necessity and propriety of such an institution (which I am happy to say, to their honour, is sanctioned by the most respectable characters in the land) very little need be said, where the Lord hath given a feeling heart; or, were it necessary to multiply arguments, I might press upon you the value of their immortal souls, the eternal welfare of which will be the chief object of this design. I might also urge the utter incapacity of the poor, who have large families, to give their little ones that instruction which is so essential to their future welfare in life; as well as the privilege of having them kept from those baneful examples of vice, which are but too prevalent in the streets of the Metropolis. These considerations, with others which your own minds must naturally suggest, will, I trust, excite you to that liberality upon



upon this occasion, which, by the blessing of God, cannot fail of being attended with the most desirable benefits.

To conclude—May the solemnities of this day live in our grateful remembrance! “Let brotherly love continue;” and that it may, let Solomon’s prayer be ours—that the eyes of our gracious God may be upon this place for good continually, and his merciful ears ever be open to the supplications which are offered up in this house. Let me also engage your prayers on my behalf, that God may make me faithful to your souls, and abundantly successful in his service. The ministration of the Gospel is a work which, though an angel might covet, yet, if unsustained by infinite goodness, even an angel must sink under.

May divine grace enable me so to dispense the word of truth amongst you, and so to exemplify it in my own conduct and practice, that, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, to demand an account of my stewardship, it may be my honour and comfort to give him such an one, as shall be for the mutual joy of all our souls, and  
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the eternal praise of his holy name; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all possible glory, dominion, and power, world without end. Amen.

THE END.  
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